



*Choosing  
The  
RIGHT  
TREE  
For Your Yard*



## The *right tree* will

- be alive and healthy in 25-50 years
- will grow to the appropriate size for the space available on your property
- provide the benefits you want when it reaches maturity
- be native to this area, and support the feeding and nesting habits of native or migratory birds in the right sequence of flower and fruit production

## The *right tree* will not

- require spraying that is damaging to the environment
- split or deteriorate after 10-15 years
- invasively reproduce in nearby properties
- discharge a toxin through its roots that kills surrounding trees, shrubs, flowers, and groundcover
- be sensitive to ice storms, harmful insects, or common diseases

## Criteria for Tree Selection

**Native Species:** Whenever possible, species of trees native to the region are preferable to non-native species. Native species are better suited to the local climate, require less maintenance, and provide habitat and food in a natural sequence for birds, butterflies, and other animals native to the area.

**Location:** Different tree species are suitable for moist or dry soil and for sunny or shady areas. A tree in the wrong location will not thrive.

**Space Availability:** The planting area should be wide enough to accommodate the width and height of the tree at maturity.

**Overhead Wires:** Where overhead utility wires exist, plant smaller recommended tree species.

**Ease of Maintenance:** Trees that require less pruning and watering are preferred. Avoid trees with short life-spans (e.g., ornamental pear or crepe myrtle) or those with weak wood (e.g., silver maple).

**Consistency with Street Names:** If your street is named after a tree species, consider planting that same species of tree in your yard (e.g., Maple Avenue, Poplar Drive, Birch Street, Oak Street, etc.)

Choose These Trees Instead		Avoid These Trees
Small Deciduous Trees	<p><b>Fringe Tree</b> — <i>Chionanthus virginicus</i> Fragrant white flowers (May)</p> <p><b>Redbud</b>—<i>Cercis canadensis</i> Delicate pink/purple flowers (April), heart-shaped leaves</p> <p><b>Serviceberry</b>—<i>Amelanchier</i> White flowers (April), edible berries (June)</p>	<p><b>Bradford Pear</b> — Starts to split after 8 years, highly invasive</p> <p><b>Flowering Dogwood</b>—Prone to deadly, contagious fungal disease</p> <p><b>All Japanese Cherries</b>—Hybridizes native trees on public land and is short-lived in the urbanized environment</p>
Medium Deciduous Trees	<p><b>Sourwood</b>—<i>Oxydendrum arboreum</i> Aromatic white clumps of flowers (July)-very slow growing</p> <p><b>Paw Paw</b>—<i>Asimina triloba</i> Edible fruit (October), large tropical leaves</p> <p><b>Yellowwood</b>—<i>Cladrastis</i> Aromatic white clumps of flowers (May)</p> <p><b>Sweetbay Magnolia</b>—<i>Magnolia virginiana</i> Fragrant white flowers, sculptured shape</p>	<p><b>White Mulberry</b>—Highly invasive, branches split</p> <p><b>Mimosa</b>—Highly invasive, wood splits easily, and prone to fungal disease</p> <p><b>White Birch</b>—Prone to borers and short-lived in Northern Virginia</p> <p><b>Golden Rain Tree</b>—Highly invasive onto other properties</p>
Large Deciduous Trees	<p><b>Tupelo</b>—<i>Nyssa sylvatica</i> Called the Sugar Maple of the South for its brilliant red autumn colors</p> <p><b>River Birch</b>—<i>Betula nigra</i> Paper-like bark, beautiful form</p> <p><b>Scarlet/Willow/Red/White/Black Oaks</b>—<i>Quercus</i> Native to this region</p>	<p><b>Norway Maple</b>—Toxic to other plants nearby, highly invasive</p> <p><b>Silver Maple</b>—Shallow roots, requires expensive maintenance</p> <p><b>Hybrid Poplar</b>—Highly invasive, weak-wooded</p> <p><b>Paulownia/Empress Tree</b>—Highly invasive, weak-wooded</p>
Evergreens	<p><b>Eastern Red Cedar</b>—<i>Juniperus virginiana</i></p> <p><b>American Holly</b>—<i>Ilex opaca</i> Classic Christmas holly—grows to large size</p> <p><b>Loblolly Pine</b>—<i>Pinus taeda</i> Similar to white pine, better adapted here</p> <p><b>Virginia Pine</b>—<i>Pinus virginiana</i> The native pine</p>	<p><b>Leyland Cypress</b>—Short-lived, develops canker disease</p> <p><b>Hemlock</b>—Deadly aphids require spraying 2-3 times per year</p> <p><b>Austrian and White Pines</b>—Prone to diseases and insect pests, easily breaks in ice storms</p> <p><b>All Spruces</b>—Attracts mites, requires spraying in city environment</p>

## 10 Good Reasons to Plant a Tree

1. Trees cool your yard and help lower summer air conditioning costs.
2. Trees help slow down traffic.
3. Trees offer privacy.
4. Trees produce oxygen and store carbon to help slow global warming.
5. Trees absorb air pollution and clean the air we breathe.
6. Trees reduce soil erosion and reduce flooding.
7. Trees provide food and habitat for birds and butterflies.
8. Trees form windbreaks that help cut winter heating costs.
9. Trees increase property values.
10. Neighborhood trees build a sense of community.

The goals of the Neighborhood Tree Program are to increase the number and quality of street trees in the City of Falls Church and to educate our citizenry on the value of trees. The program was initiated in spring 2000 by the Falls Church Village Preservation and Improvement Society ([www.vpis.org](http://www.vpis.org)) and is operated under the guidance of the City Manager and the City's Recreation and Parks Division. Call 703-248-5077 for information.